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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on ongoing research investigating the role of literacy in the secondary schools of England. A National Literacy Strategy was introduced in England in 1997, its principal initial focus being primary schools. It was always clear, however, that the strategy would influence secondary schools and later it became apparent that the strategy itself would be "continued" into the secondary phase. This research has continuously investigated the way secondary schools focus on the issue of literacy and in the future will examine their full implementation of the national strategy. The paper reports on recent work developed from principally survey-based research, undertaken two years ago, and reported in 1998 and 1999. Many changes have occurred in the education scene in that brief period, and the paper comments on those where relevant. Concerns are with the emergent definitions of literacy in operation and with the relationships between policy and practice. One significant factor in the investigation is the subject of English and its teachers, and although it is not the prime focus here, it inevitably features at certain points. In 1999 another national strategy, designed to upgrade the computer literacy of all teachers, was introduced, and its impact on the research could not be ignored. The other key factor was the increasing evidence that for students their lived experience of literacy was increasingly influenced by computer technologies. A methodological decision was to approach everything (surveys, interviews, and observations) from the perspective of "traditional" literacy but to "probe" whether computer technologies were impacting any of the foci, principally practice and the practitioners sense of agency. Includes 11 notes. (Contains 26 references and a literacy questionnaire.) (NKA)

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Shaping literacy in the secondary school: policy, practice and agency.

Andrew Goodwyn Senior Lecturer, Deputy Head of the School of Education and Director of the Centre for Languages, English and Media Education

Kate Findlay, Research fellow the Centre for Languages, English and Media Education

Contact:

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Andrew Goodwyn
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF READING,
BULMERSHE COURT READING RG6 1HY , UK
Tel: 0118 9318868
Fax: 0118 9352080
E-mail: a.c.goodwyn@reading.ac.uk

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Shaping literacy in the secondary school: policy, practice and agency.

This paper reports on ongoing research investigating the role of literacy in the secondary schools of England. A National Literacy Strategy was introduced in England in 1997, its principal initial focus being primary schools. However it was always clear that the strategy would influence secondary schools and later it became apparent that the Strategy itself would be 'continued' into the secondary phase. Our research has continuously investigated the way secondary schools focus on the issue of literacy and in the future will examine their full implementation of the national strategy. This paper reports on recent work developed from principally survey based research, undertaken two years ago, and reported in 1998 and 1999. There have been many changes to the education scene in even that brief period and this paper will comment on those where relevant. Our concerns here are with the emergent definitions of literacy in operation and with the relationships between policy and practice. One very significant factor in such an investigation is the subject of English and its teachers and although it is not our prime focus here it inevitably features at certain points.

The other major development which influenced our work was the introduction of another national strategy in 1999, two years after the NLS had begun. This strategy, known as the NOF training [see below], was designed to upgrade the computer literacy of all serving teachers. Although conceived as a totally distinct policy initiative at government and Education department level we could not ignore its impact on our research as for teachers in particular their lived experience of these policies was at least potentially simultaneous. The other key factor was the increasing evidence that for students their lived experience of literacy was increasingly influenced by computer technologies. Our methodological decision was to approach everything i.e. surveys, interviews and observations from the perspective of 'traditional' literacy but to 'probe' whether computer technologies were impacting on any of our foci, principally practice itself and the practitioners sense of agency. We were also interested in whether these two policies would ever 'connect' and if so how and in what ways.

Introduction

That literacy is one of the key issues in almost all educational systems is now axiomatic. What is especially striking is that those English speaking educational systems[1] that have the longest established tradition of teaching literacy to their populations seem to have developed an almost obsessive concern with literacy over the last decade of the twentieth century. We have discussed elsewhere [Goodwyn and Findlay 1998] how the term's rise to dominance is somewhat paradoxical. For most of the last century it was almost exclusively discussed in relation to *illiteracy*, especially amongst adults; currently its use as *literacy* is prevalent, implying an entitlement and level of competence required by all post-industrial economies. This emergent definition is in itself much contested and we shall return to this point.

This current research endeavours to investigate a matrix of relationships, geographically within the Southern region of England but with some claim to being nationally representative and also with resonances for international comparisons[2]; this research continues and its longer term aims are considered below. It attempts to bring together the views and perceptions of the key agents concerned with the concept of literacy in the secondary school. We use the term agents because in our view no individual involved in these processes is merely a passive victim of the directives of others and we outline the key agents below.

To be comprehensible the research first needs placing within the specific national context of England, its National Literacy Strategy and its New Opportunities Fund computer training for serving teachers. This can first be summarised as a timeline as follows:-

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[1] The USA, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand - we accept that other countries might easily be added. However these education systems appear most directly to compare themselves to each other.

[2] For example, the recent report from Queensland 'Literate Futures' describes remarkably similar contextual issues to those present in our findings.

1973	Committee established to investigate falling reading standards
1975	The Bullock Report: A Language for Life
1975-1985	Language Across the Curriculum 'movement'
1984	HMI - English 5-16
1986	HMI - Responses to English 5-16
1988	The Kingman Report
1989	The Cox Report/National Curriculum
1993	Revision to the National Curriculum
1995	Further revisions to the National Curriculum
1995	National Literacy project
1997	The Labour Party National Literacy Task Force
1997	National Literacy Strategy pilot projects
1998	NLS full implementation Key stages 1 and 2 Framework for teaching introduced
1998	Government begins to develop The National Grid for Learning
1998-9	The National Year of Reading
1999	The New Opportunities Fund for teachers begins providing training for all serving teachers in ICT skills
1999	NLS review of research
2000	First report of OISE Evaluation
2000	Pilot of secondary 'framework' [all schools encouraged to be pro-active]
2001	Framework for English/whole school literacy
2001	Second report of OISE evaluation
2002-3	Full implementation of Framework in KS3
2003-4	Completion of ICT training?

We begin the timeline in 1975 because The Language Across the Curriculum movement has some parallels with the current strategy but more fundamentally it makes an interesting contrast with the NLS. It evolved from the educational research of the 'London' school, chiefly represented by Britton[3], Barnes, Martin, Rosen et al who argued for a total review of schooling and for a national initiative to reform the way language was used by teachers and understood by students. For our purposes the key issue is that the government inquiry into falling standards of reading was completely overtaken by the work of the London school and became a very different project called 'Language Across the Curriculum', around the slogan 'every teacher is a teacher of language'. The project was not 'official' government policy but was taken up enthusiastically by Local Authorities, their schools and by teachers. As LEAs in particular were then[4] the most powerful agents in education their channelling of resources and expertise into this initiative was highly effective. Over time the momentum was lost and also new initiatives such as the Technical and Vocational Education initiative [which was government policy] and the reform of the examination system took over as the 'big issues'. However the influence of LAC was very far reaching and its penetration into practice was very real.

By the mid 1980s a right wing government was once more concerned about 'standards' in schools, especially in the subject 'English' and commissioned studies by Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools, focusing particularly on perceived falling standards in grammar. The outcome of this approach was the decision to set up a highly centralised national curriculum, the intention being to control content and assessment and to rest power from the LEAs.

One effect of the National Curriculum was a profound change to primary practice. The child centred model of the 1970s and 1980s was gradually replaced by a much more subject driven approach to pedagogy. For

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[3] Britton's Language and learning, 1970 may be seen as setting out the rationale for the whole movement.

[4] LEAs have had their power and their resources diminished progressively for about 15 years, radically reducing their degree of agency.

example the 1990s saw subject names like Science and English appearing on the primary curriculum and primary teachers adopting a 'subject lesson' approach to teaching rather than a more holistic, topic led style. By the mid 1990s there was some evidence that primary teachers were paying much less attention to reading and writing per se. The right wing government then in power initiated yet another review of reading and writing and entitled it The National Literacy Project. This small scale project involved 250 schools in a pilot study. However the Labour Party, sensing imminent political victory, set up its own Literacy Task Force and on gaining power in 1996, operationalised this Task Force into the National Literacy Strategy by 1997. The 'New' Labour government was absolute about occupying the central political ground and thus drawing on what would previously have been perceived as right wing thinking, the NLS made a perfect educational vehicle for this ideological repositioning.[5] The NLS was always conceived as a top down strategy and so would require a hierarchy and to engage staff, 'agents' at every level.

In simple, descriptive terms these agents include the architects of the National Literacy Strategy, a governmental 'organisation'. At this, national level, the agents may be divided into the political and the educational policy makers. These 'national' agents devise strategies, appoint other agents, create documents and thus, they hope change practice and "raise standards". At the regional level are similar agents charged with ensuring that this process is working. Within each region there continue to be Local Education Authority level agents who come in various guises with differing titles, usually 'consultant', and job descriptions. Broadly however they are concerned with groups of schools and with ensuring the impact of all the above on actual schools, usually on key staff. Schools have various key staff, chiefly with management and co-ordination type roles, meant to link with the LEA level. Teachers themselves experience all of this and are expected to mediate it to their pupils, the ultimate 'beneficiaries' of the whole process. Ofsted[6] provides another set of key agents whose role is very visibly to inspect individual schools and local authorities and to check up on them.

There are other agents in the complex picture. Somewhere, almost inevitably in this kind of top down model of change, rather on the fringes, are some researchers, in our case poking our proverbial noses in and asking some awkward questions but essentially adopting a disinterested stance in order to aspire towards objectivity. But other very 'interested' parties are involved. For example, there are two other governmental bodies. One is The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority which designs all the assessments, the other, The Teacher Training Agency which oversees all initial [and other] teacher training. There are charitable organisations for example the National Literacy Trust. Publishers clearly have a huge interest in the provision of endless resources for such a vast scheme. This list is indicative not exhaustive.

The Strategy itself is characterised by its prescriptiveness and its attempts at uniformity. Schools are provided with masses of documentation, training materials and consultant support. Their goals are to raise standards as measured by a single, nation wide set of tests at ages 7,11 and 14 and are set for them by the NLS itself. It is a policy that attempts to subsume all agency by making everyone do the same and that has a surveillance system to monitor that this happens in practice.

Theoretical framework

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[5] The most striking and symbolic example of this 'move' was New Labour's retention of Chris Woodhead [a ferocious critic of all things left/progressive] as Head of Ofsted.

[6] The Office for Standards in Education – this body is charged with the inspection of the education system at all levels [except all aspects of Universities apart from teacher training which is within their remit] and for the production of public domain reports reporting their judgements on each institution. Perhaps the most telling phrase in their inspection instruments is that they can find an institution "not compliant" i.e. not fitting in with a directive – such institutions can be closed down.

There are two key elements in our framework. The first is what constitutes literacy i.e. how it is defined and, frequently, how it is carefully undefined. The second is the relationship between policy and practice and more particularly the role of the teacher charged with embodying them together.

School-centric literacy

In this paper we investigate what we believe is an increasingly consensual definition of what we call school-centric literacy. Research into literacy can never claim to be neutral, what we adopt is a disinterested stance on the NLS. We believe, building on the work of other theorists and researchers that the NLS does operate an implicit definition of literacy, a definition somewhat at odds with its explicit version, and our role is to investigate whether this is the case and, if so, what are the implications for those affected by the Strategy; for the purposes of this study this is specifically the 'agents, mentioned above.

This term school-centric follows on partly from work done by Street (Street 1984) and others who use the term "school literacy"; we have added the –centric to emphasise and clarify (in the way 'logocentric' does) how absolutely and exclusively this literacy belongs to school. However the conceptualisation of that form of literacy is essentially vocationalised with an economic imperative. The rationale is that the school model of literacy is the one that will ensure 'our' economic survival and competitiveness.

We are also adapting here Lankshear's analysis of the meanings of literacy in educational reforms [Lankshear 1998]. He argues that his analysis of key reform texts[7] suggests four different constructions of literacy as follows :- lingering basics, new basics, elite literacies and foreign language literacy [Lankshear p.741]. Lingering basics refers to survival level decoding competences, principally print with some reference to numbers. The new basics are premised on the idea that much higher order skills are now needed by all workers, critical thinking, Lankshear argues is a kind of 'grab bag' [Lankshear p.749] for a whole range of capacities seen as desirable in the new work order. A strong link occurs here with Street's work. He has focused on how literacy is seen as autonomous and the new basics is very focused on making individuals self-reliant, problem solving etc.. One might argue that workers once needed literacy to be told what to do, now they need it to know what to do without being told. Elite literacies relate to domains of knowledge and disciplines and stress the capacity for improvement and innovation within those fields, they seem to offer a limited criticality. We feel that these three elements are strongly present in the NLS conceptualisation of literacy. Interestingly the 'foreign language' element is completely missing from the English model, perhaps unusually clear evidence of England's linguistic complacency?

We argue that this school-centric definition informs the thinking of both the agents of the strategy and of the increasingly important school agents. It is not therefore the definition of, for example, all teachers. Indeed interview data in particular reveals the myriad ways that agents acknowledge this by planning to overcome anticipated 'resistance'. We feel that most of the agents see resistance as essentially ignorance rather than knowledgeable subversion; there is a constant tendency in their discourse which reveals their mission to enlighten. A fundamental part of their mission is to help teachers adopt the consensual definition of school-centric literacy.

We argue that this definition is not that of much of the research community which has increasingly adopted the concept of 'literacies' sometimes, 'multi-literacies' (e.g. Lankshear 1997, Buckingham 1993)). There the debate has often centred on how many literacies we might identify e.g. visual, print, computer, media etc. and on to what extent these literacies overlap or compete with each other. There has also been much work on the value positions and status of these various literacies with the general suggestion that the former dominance of print literacy is now under threat and that the 'new' literacies, especially those associated with technology will soon supplant print literacy in every sense including status. A point often made there, and relevant to this discussion, is that schools in England, remain technologically primitive whilst the real world and the domestic space are often sophisticated omni-tech environments. There is no doubt that the new basics model in some educational systems, especially Australasia [see Lankshear 1998] does include a technological dimension. However, we feel that our research suggests that Information and Communications Technology [ICT] not only remains outside the English school-centric definition but, as

[7] Lankshear draws mostly on North America and Australasia.

we analyse it, actually reinforces the essentially lingering basics notion specified in the NLS, this is more fully discussed below. As mentioned above the total separation between the NLS and NOF initiatives is remarkable in itself.

The NLS Explicit definition

Where exactly is the NLS definition of literacy that secondary schools should at least consider? In the 'Rationale' section of the Framework document [DfEE 2001] we have these two paragraphs:

> The notion of literacy embedded in the objectives is much more than simply the acquisition of basic skills which is sometimes implied by the word: it encompasses the ability to recognise understand and manipulate the conventions of language, and develop pupils' ability to use language imaginatively and flexibly. The Framework also encompasses speaking and listening to support English teachers in planning to meet the full demands of the National Curriculum, and to tie in the development of oral skills with parallel demands in written text.
>
> English teachers have the leading role in providing pupils with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to read, write, speak and listen effectively, but this document also addresses other subject staff. Language is the prime medium through which pupils learn and express themselves across the curriculum, and all teachers have a stake in effective literacy. A set of cross-curricular Language for Learning objectives has been identified to support the co-ordination of departments working together on literacy.

In order to reinforce the idea that these skills are not basic, the next section outlining the "overall aim of the framework" [p.3] states "is to enable all pupils to develop sophisticated literacy skills" and as result at the end of year 9 [age about 14] each pupil is expected to be:

A shrewd and fluent independent reader:

- orchestrating a range of strategies to get at meaning in text, including inferential and evaluative skills;
- sensitive to the way meanings are made;
- reading in different ways for different purposes, including skimming to quickly pick up the gist of a text, scanning to locate specific information, close reading to follow complex passages and re-reading to uncover layers of meaning; reflective, critical and discriminating in response to a wide range of printed and visual texts.

A confident writer:

- able to write for a variety of purposes and audiences, knowing the conventions and beginning to adapt and develop them;
- able to write imaginatively, effectively and correctly;
- able to shape, express, experiment with and manipulate sentences; able to organise, develop, spell and punctuate writing accurately.

An effective speaker and listener:

- with the clarity and confidence to convey a point of view or information;
- using talk to explore, create, question and revise ideas, recognising language as a tool for learning;
- able to work effectively with others in a range of roles; having a varied repertoire of styles, which are used appropriately.

Clearly the emphasis is on what a pupil can do and with the new [September 2002] policy emphasis on Citizenship[8] this is not surprising, there are some interesting words to highlight. Readers should be shrewd, independent, reflective, critical and discriminating, this sounds rather like critical literacy of the Freirian variety. However, the emphasis is also on the singular pupil, the autonomous individual. This critical edge looks much blunter when related to the content of the curriculum itself. Each reader will be displaying these critical capacities on the narrow cultural heritage model of the English National Curriculum and will be assessed on their literary powers at the end of Key Stage Three on two scenes from a Shakespeare play. An examination of the content to be covered in Key Stage Three reveals a very heavy emphasis on linguistic terminology and language rules. It might be argued that language is portrayed as for analysis in a sense distancing the pupil from language in use. This reveals yet another step away from the attempt by the Language in the National Curriculum project of the early 90s, to place language study firmly in a Hallidayean socio-linguistic model [Carter, 1992].

In this respect the content certainly displays continuity with the current Key Stage Two Literacy Hour. We are suggesting therefore, that the critical element implied in the definition is severely blunted by the conservative content of the curriculum and forms of assessment. The emphasis of that curriculum, including Curriculum 2000 in place from September 2000, is still far more on fairly traditional models of reading and writing and far less on speaking and listening. On balance there is a new element in the National Curriculum, the core skills, where one strand is clearly intended to highlight working with others. This can rightly be seen as a potentially significant but the lesson of the original NC cross-curricular themes[9], the supposed cement of the NC, is that vague shared responsibilities do not produce results in subject divided secondary schools. Some of our previous work, investigating the views of English teachers (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1997), has revealed how frustrated they are by the extremely narrow and conservative nature of the English curriculum.

Our essential point is that this school-centric definition of literacy remains just that, a means of succeeding within a traditional/elite academic curriculum. In one clear way this is an honest acknowledgement that schools, secondary ones especially, place enormous demands on children and the literacy they require is a very particular one. It might have the potential to shift the traditional emphasis on curriculum content to a new focus on the literacy practices through which that content is given meaning and status. Knowing about a subject could give way to knowing in the subject which is thus demystified and made transparent. This would require a very different stance on pedagogy for many subject specialists. For example the QCA, following from the now defunct SCAA (1997), is revisiting the Language Across the Curriculum model by offering guidance about literacy across the curriculum and reinforcing this with statutory requirements that teachers of all subjects should demonstrate their awareness in their planning and teaching. Ofsted are empowered to check that schools are 'compliant'. Essentially this emphasis, if not the process adopted to create it, mirrors what Barnes (1976), Britton (1970) and co were asking for in the 1970s. Students are thus being trained in school-centric literacy and one would expect Standards that test this literacy to rise quite dramatically and rapidly. In the primary phase there have been rises in test scores although there validity on the one hand and their usefulness on the other have been constantly questioned.

The element missing from this current definition is a simple one. As the curriculum remains what we have called elsewhere a 'preservative one' (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1997), this school-centric literacy remains singularly divorced from the social experience of children. Literacy is, in the Freirean (Freire 1972) sense, a means of individual and group, empowerment, a vehicle for participation in the discourses that shape our lives, including those in the evolving electronic media. It is also never ahistorical or apolitical, insisting that literacy is always 'problematic' and will be contested by the powerful. But the school model pays very little attention to the historical and political nature of literacy and even less to the whole area of media and electronic text, especially to the multi-modal world of the internet and interactive technologies. We are saying nothing new here. We also recognise, and our survey data backs this up, that schools in England are

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[8] All English secondary schools must teach Citizenship from September 2002.

[9] When the National Curriculum was first designed it included five cross-curricular themes e.g. Environmental education - these quietly disappeared after a few years.

still rather more nineteenth than even twentieth century structures. We therefore included in our survey several questions about ICT and Literacy. Ultimately we felt that the nature of our respondents, almost all in middle or senior management positions, would mean that they would have informed views about both areas and their convergence. The majority of teachers willingness to engage with more electronic literacies is increasingly evident as is their frequently desperate frustration at lack of access and resources. The Catch 22 remains then that the school-centric model genuinely suits the constrictive demands of schooling.

The asocial model of literacy also promotes individual ability and achievement at the expense of an alternative perspective which recognises the cultural nature of literacy practices, and the differences in language use which relate to class, ethnicity and gender. It fails to acknowledge the social experiences of pupils who operate informal literacies in their homes and communities, glossing over differences on the name of standards. Yet if teachers are concerned to attend to the diversity of pupils' experiences and needs, they may resist the imposition of a 'one for all' policy and veer towards Street's model of ideological literacy which emphasises the social and cultural specificity of literacy practices. Alternatively, they may engage in what Street describes as the "pedagogisation" of autonomous literacy whereby the literacy practices not valued in school 'come to be seen as an inferior attempts at the real thing, to be compensated for by enhanced schooling '(Street 1991). The move to provide extra literacy lessons for pupils with low literacy levels reported by many respondents suggests that this may be the course schools are taking.

Teachers: agents or recipients? The policy perspective

We are concerned in this research with the complex and inevitably contradictory nature of a huge national project that is clearly 'working' and simultaneously being transformed and interpreted by its workers. Stephen Ball has summarised this complexity very effectively, explaining how policy discourses may shape individual agency but also emphasising the possibility of individuals claiming agency within these discourses. The effect of policy is, he explains, primarily discursive, since it changes the possibilities for thinking things 'otherwise' and so limits our responses to change. Yet this totalising effect is tempered by the policy text which is just that, an encoded representation which must be decoded and enacted on a number of levels: "Given constraints, circumstances and practicalities, the translation of the crude, abstract simplicities of policy texts into interactive and sustainable practices of some sort involves thought, invention and adaptation. And the more ideologically abstract any policy is, the more distant in conception from practice, the less likely it is to be accommodated in unmediated form into the context of practice....." (Ball, 1994) This helps us to conceptualise both the national project and therefore discuss it as a kind of actuality whilst also treating individuals as encompassed by this actuality and yet not engulfed by it.

Ball et al (1992) also propose a model of the policy cycle to avoid the idea that 'policy is simply something done to people.' They specify three policy contexts: *initial influence*, *policy text production and of practice*. Each context involves 'struggle and compromise and ad hocery'.
The micro-political processes of schools provide the milieux for policy recontextualisation, therefore policy research must attend to each context and so 'Policy trajectory studies' are proposed as '... they employ a cross-sectional rather than a single level analysis by tracing policy formulation, struggles and response from within the state itself through to the various recipients of policy.' [Bowe, R and Ball, S. 1992]

We also draw on another helpful perspective, that of Croll et al (1994) who have articulated various ways of defining the agency, or lack of it, of teachers caught up in some large scale policy initiative. They discuss four models, teacher as either partner, implementer, resister or, their preferred description, as "policy maker in practice". "If, either because of similar structural or situational constraints, or because of similar attitudes and ideologies (or because of an interaction of these), teachers interpret and prioritise policy changes in consistent ways, then the outcomes of these individual actions will have a systematic effect on the practical outcomes of policy .... (which) ... may effectively re-direct educational activities in a way that makes teachers policy makers", (Croll et al"). This latter definition fits well with our research as mentioned above. We see both teachers and others as having agency whilst acknowledging that policy shapes their thoughts and actions sufficiently to lead to what we call 'semi-systematic outcomes'. So our survey responses include very many comments which reveal individual voices, although we are unable to give much space to them here. The interview data especially reveals the sensitivity of LEA personnel in

particular as they make subtle judgements about how to interact with individual schools and teachers, to make the NLS meaningful to them. Our research so far provides clear patterns that we feel are nationally representative the majority of which fit with the 'fundamentalist tendency' [see below] of the NLS. We also note here the limiting effects of questionnaires [see the appendix] which tend to smooth over the rougher edges of individual reaction. Teacher comments and interview data provide clearer evidence of where the policy may be seen to be only 'semi-systematic' in its effects.

Methodology

We undertook a survey of 230 schools across 10 LEAs, conducted in June 2000, there were 75 returns, a response rate of about 30%. This is a sufficient number to argue for some representativeness. This was followed up by a qualitative strand, consisting of interviews with representatives of key agents, firstly regional directors and LEA literacy consultants; secondly practitioners themselves, this group includes many teachers who are also in management roles. We followed up interviews with classroom observations by exploring that part of the matrix where an LEA agent recommends a particular school as a site where exemplary work is taking place. At this point we note that survey findings suggest that many secondary schools, 73% in this case, know that the LEA has a specific post but only 42% consider the post holders to be "effective", 24% considered them ineffective and 33% did not respond. We suggest that this shows that there is almost inevitably some tension and uncertainty about the value of this role from a school's perspective. However it may also reveal how important that role will become in the very near future should schools actively seek help and we discuss this further below.

Each LEA representative was interviewed on a semi-structured basis and the tape then transcribed. Interview data is analysed holistically but we are especially interested in exploring the 'fundamentalist discourse' of each text and in particular references to policies, documents and to significant events such as training and encounters with teachers. Initially we present and discuss the survey findings, providing graphic representations of the survey data in the appendices. This is followed by a selective discussion of the interview data and the lesson observations. We offer some comments about classroom practice based on interviews and observation.

Analysis of the data

The survey [see appendix for the key questions] was an attempt to gauge the position of secondary schools [i.e. what they were doing] as they began to make literacy a priority and to gain some perspective on their at least implied views about what literacy is [i.e. what they are thinking]. An earlier study, reported at BERA in 1998 and subsequently published established some trends that have been substantiated by the 2000 survey. Inevitably our sample, on a return of 30%, cannot claim to be fully representative and we also acknowledge that more 'clued up' schools were likely to respond. However to counter this, the wide geographic and social range of the schools does provide a useful sense of breadth. The same range of schools was surveyed in 1998. In 1998 just over seventy per cent of schools saw literacy as a major priority, in 2000 the figure is 92%. In 1998 many schools seemed unclear what kind of provision they should be making about literacy, this was evident, for example, in confusions over who was responsible for effecting change. In 2000, 80% of schools have a working party or equivalent, 65% have a whole school policy and 73% know that their LEA has a post for Secondary school literacy. Schools show increasing confidence in what they are doing 62% claim to have raised standards in the last two years, 71% have intervention programmes in Key Stage 3,and 56% say they have methods for monitoring the outcomes of their initiatives. However this leaves 39% who answered no, suggesting that getting something underway has taken priority over setting up means to evaluate progress

An area of particular interest for us is centred on the relationship between primary and secondary. In 1998 most schools thought that the information they received from primary was at best fair and generally inadequate and they also acknowledged that they made little effective use of it. At that time they were expending time and resources on selecting base line tests with the implication that this might correct inadequate primary records. In 2000, 71% of schools state that they are "sufficiently aware of recent developments in literacy teaching" in primary schools, 48% felt the quality of information from primaries had improved [despite 45% saying 'no' this still shows positive change from 1998], and 48% claimed that

they were now making "effective use of this information". We suggest that these are the signs of the beginning of a process as secondary schools essentially 'wake up' to the task. For example schools [65%] reject the NLS model as applied to primary schools and [80%] do not plan to adopt the literacy hour model in year 7. We feel this does show that they understand what this model actually is [see below]. However it is clear from comments that these schools have yet to decide what they plan to do. The Framework itself, piloted after the questionnaire was administered, and with the clear expectation that non-pilot schools will implement it anyway, is written with very strong elements of the literacy hour in mind. Perhaps more significantly most schools are now visiting primaries to observe literacy teaching [79%], liaison meetings now occasionally [38%] and regularly [20%] specifically focus on Literacy with only a minority [21%] never focusing on the topic. Since 1998 there has clearly been a significant shift in the relationship between secondaries and feeder primaries, the former now say they are far more in tune with the literacy activities of the former and are ready to recognise their need to build on their foundational work.

Given the huge governmental drive[10] to improve both literacy and teachers' ICT competence we included a brief section on ICT to probe for schools emerging views about the role of ICT in improving literacy. We also wished to consider how school's views of literacy compared to the multi-literacies concept of some of the research community. We deliberately did not offer competing definitions of literacy, so we have used inference to speculate on how teachers conceptualise the place of the electronic media in school.

Overall these questions produced few surprises although the responses to the first question suggest a higher usage than we would have predicted. The use of ICT in developing pupils' reading and writing skills is still rarely for 39% but frequently for 39% and 17% consistently. This puts at over 50% the regular use of ICT in reading and writing. However in relation to whether the growth of ICT has been significant in improving pupil's literacy development only 25% agreed, 36% claimed quite significant and 32% insignificant. Again this puts ICT use into the mainstream majority of schooling, particularly when related to the clear frustrations expressed about ICT resources with 52% finding them insufficient, 20% sufficient, good 20% and only 5% excellent.

We feel that this both reveals the genuine lack of resources available but also the far greater understanding that schools have of what they could do with decent resources. This is also reflected in the fact that 45% use software packages designed to develop pupils' literacy whereas 52% do not and in judging how useful ICT has been so far in raising standards of literacy in the school only 5% said very, 17% useful, 41% quite useful and 36% an emphatic not useful. In looking into the future and to the use of ICT in raising literacy standards 20% said very useful, 36% useful, 29% quite useful and none not useful. Overall then this places ICT rather more in the useful than the essential category in relation to literacy development. We also asked the respondents to estimate subject teachers use of ICT on a high, moderate, low scale. The results reveal that no subject is rated at above 21%, Maths is thus rated, other relative highs are Modern Languages at 17%, English, Science and Geography at 15%, Art at 14%. Most subjects are seen as moderate users, Science 58%, English and Maths 53%, Geography 45%, History 44%Music 35% and Art 33%. Once some lows are added into the picture, Drama 71%, Music 47%, Art 44%, Languages 47%, History 39% and so on we feel that this picture fits with our own view of the current state of ICT use in schools. The subjects concerned very directly with written and spoken language e.g. English, History, Languages do not seem to leading the way; this supports our contention that electronic literacy is not conceptualised as part of the school-centric model.

We commented above that one clear reason for this is the school-centric nature of the literacy in question. Comments suggested that many respondents see ICT as essentially supporting the literacy development of the less able i.e. as linked to a deficit model in school, very much a lingering basics approach. As we argued earlier we feel that society has already developed a very different model in which electronic literacy carries an absolute premium. Overall we suggest these figures show schools coping with the demands of school-centric literacy whilst recognising that their resources are inadequate. There will be more analysis in the discussion section below.

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[10] The New Opportunities Fund scheme to train all serving teachers in ICT skills between 1998-2002.

The interviews

Interviewees include a Primary Literacy Consultant, a General Inspector [English] and a Deputy Head [formerly a Head of English] all from the same LEA [LEA W], an English advisor[secondary focus LEA B], an LEA Strategy manager [LEA S], a primary Literacy Consultant [LEA WB] and an English and Literacy Consultant [secondary] and Head of English, both from LEA SU. This provides us with a useful spread at the school and LEA level but only partly fulfils our matrix model. Our case study will therefore be LEA W where the matrix is most complete. For the purposes of this paper when discussing literacy we shall focus on how the NLS is seen to be 'working'. We shall then examine the idea of individual agency in relation to policy.

Case Study: LEA W.

(a) The LEA perspective.

LEA W is a relatively small authority, with 11 secondary schools, (one of which is in 'special measures'), 50 primary schools and one special school. It is principally an area of considerable affluence with generally good results above the national average. Interviews were conducted with the two key 'actors' responsible for implementing the National Literacy Strategy using semi-structured interview techniques.

The Primary Literacy Consultant,(A),an experienced primary practitioner, was appointed on a two year contract in 1998. She described her role as one of 'supporting identified schools in order to implement the Literacy Hour so they can raise their literacy standards.' The General Inspector (English) is an ex-Head of English who became English Advisor for the county in 1990. When the larger structure was dismantled in 1998, she took on her current role which also includes Drama, developing the Arts, monitoring pupils educated at home and acting as Client Officer for the Educational Library Services.

The LEA is not piloting the Key Stage 3 Framework, so there is no new appointment to develop literacy initiatives in secondary schools. The responsibility lies with these key actors who have worked closely together to implement the NLS in primary schools, and are now turning their attention to the secondary phase.

The interviews focused on how they see their role within the broad framework which exists to translate curriculum rhetoric into curriculum reality. Since the Education Reform Act 1988, the power of LEAs to work directly with schools in devising curriculum has been eroded, and the imposition of a National Curriculum, together with a requirement that schools be directly responsible to the Secretary of State through OFSTED, has meant that they are at once more accountable but less able to exercise any real powers of intervention. The NLS has arrived without consulting them, and they are required to ensure its successful implementation at school level. How do they respond to this role?

In a simple sense, neither respondent had any fundamental argument with the idea of a NLS or the rationale which underpins it. The need as they see it is to persuade teachers of its value:

'I think we have moved on a lot in two years. When I first started the job there was so much resistance, and it is only through doing it that teachers have come to realise there is value to this. They didn't want to change their ways but having made that move they can see the benefits in the ways children can talk about literacy, the competencies they have and the whole thing about the Key Stage 1 and 2 Framework is that it is one of high expectations ...' (A)

'I very much like the clarity which encourages the modelling of different text structures. The teaching sequence promoted through the Key Stage 3 materials where you are looking at immersion in a text type, getting them to identify for themselves the features that you are modelling through thinking aloud, through scaffolding, through selecting, through all of those processes you want them to go through on a white board or OHP. You are scaffolding the activity for them and pushing them on to independence. And I like that model.' (B) There is an awareness that they are ultimately accountable to central government:

'I am funded by the Standards Fund and you have to be restricted by what they say ...''

yet they do not see themselves as mere rubber stamps of alien policy texts but perceive a space which allows for creative response:

'When I started I didn't know exactly what the role would turn out like but I am happy with the way it has gone. I've been fortunate in being able to make it my own and I've had lots of opportunities to do things that maybe some Consultants haven't because they've kept to a very narrow criteria.' (A)

Their official remit is interpreted very much in terms of 'training':

'Implementing the NLS meant that Jo and I had to lay on the training for primary head-teachers and subsequent to that initial training there has been a lot more at various levels, management issues and courses looking at what heads and co-ordinators should be doing, courses helping people get to grips with target setting, and data handling and analysis ...' (B)

They accept their roles as mediators of state policy:

'I am a mediator of any sensible, useful materials I can get my hands on to help them.' (B)

In practice, however, this simple role is more ambiguous since universal directives are not always sensitive to the variety of contexts with which they interact. This was highlighted in relation to the 'materials' provided for the Summer Literacy Conferences held in Summer 1999. Each secondary school in the authority was invited to send the Head-teacher, Head of English and SENCO and there was an expectation that they would then conduct a Key Stage 3 Literacy Audit in their schools:

'I was annoyed when I looked at the materials because I could see that the audit was so obviously an English Department audit because it had terms in it such as narrative poems, the kind of thing that would switch your Head of Science off. Other colleagues from other disciplines would take one look at it and say this has nothing to do with me. It would need to be re-written.' (B)

In the event, she did re-write it, in consultation with the Literacy Consultant in Greenwich who had developed a successful Audit for schools in the borough. What became clear in the course of the interviews was that any impact at school level has happened because the respondents have successfully accommodated the Strategy to suit the needs of individual schools:.

'Mainly I go into schools and do staff meetings and address the specific needs of schools. ... I say, what programme do you want to work with, what are the issues, where do we need to concentrate resources. And we plan something from that.' (A)

'I realised the global approach I had initially taken in our Education Development Plan which set up a Working Party, promoting various initiatives through that Working Party, was not going to work. To be effective I needed to talk to individual schools about the way in for them.' (B)

Faced with resistance at school level, the mandatory nature of initiatives provides them with a powerful persuasive mechanism so enhancing powers of intervention:

'I've been able to draw on the new orders for 2000 which have a very clear statement about the role of literacy in the context of all subjects, and the new inspection framework. And I've read these two pieces out and made it clear that all subjects will be inspected and part of that will be literacy.' (B)

But this is tempered by a desire to retain some sense of agency:

'How can I work strategically through the EDP when I have six new initiatives land on my desk and they wipe out my own priorities?' (B)

Despite this overload, there is evidence of curriculum developments which go beyond the strictures of the policy remit and suggest a feeling of being responsive to a more local community context:

'I love working with the Arts Development Officer here and the Library Services Manager and between us we have put bids in and have been successful in getting a Literacy Development Officer, so I work closely with her on projects to bring writers into the authority, setting up exciting projects.' (B)

In one secondary school with a high ratio of second language speakers, a black performance poet spent two days running workshops with pupils. The Primary Consultant organised a project for Year 5 and 6 pupils to 'extend learning in the Literacy Hour' by working with a local poet in the three weeks leading up to National Poetry Day in October 1999; it was funded by the local Rotary Club!

In terms of the impact of literacy initiatives in individual schools, only three of the eleven secondary schools were at the stage of conducting literacy audits following a Literacy Day on the Strategy and the rationale behind it:

'The problem is, given the diversity of my role, it is very hard to be systematic about following up in every school. I do need to go back to them because at a few schools there hasn't been so much of a drive. ... It is all very well to write a policy but I am aware that I need to go back and monitor a range of lessons to see how their practice is fulfilling what they say they are doing.' (B)

Both respondents expressed a desire to ensure that literacy did not become the responsibility of just the English Department, 'how the science teacher, the maths teacher can teach literacy', (A):

'The video I have for the key Stage 3 English Conference, which I will be sharing with our schools in October on a two day conference, to disseminate, shows an English teacher modelling how to write a recipe. What I am interested in is watching the Home Economics teacher doing that, the Science teacher teaching how to write up an experiment, and the History teacher how to construct a persuasive argument, how those subject specialists can take responsibility for the text types that relate to their own subjects.' (B)

Commitment from the senior management team was regarded as the key to success:

'Schools are only motivated to do things if their head-teachers and senior managers have the vision that they will improve and see this as a means of doing it and put aside quality time for it, as part of their vision for whole school improvement.' (B)

It was striking that most discussion centred on writing, with little mention of reading and no mention of speaking and listening, which is a strand in the Key Stage 3 Framework, (absent from the Primary NLS). And no comments were volunteered on the potential of ICT for promoting these skills, or any sense that literacy is changing with the impact of new technologies. Direct questions produced a recognition that ICT has a positive role to play in 'motivating boys and less able pupils' (A) but it was frequently 'used badly, just for word processing', copying work already written by hand rather than 'redrafting and improving writing'. The purpose of the activity was often simply to master the technology:

'Unless they've got very good key-boarding skills it's laborious and they don't get far enough quick enough and it's frustrating for them and I don't think it promotes literacy. They are just practising key-boarding skills.' (A)

Both respondents made reference to problems of limited access and lack of teacher expertise but were keen to support the idea of new literacies required to use new technologies:

'It comes down to the confidence teachers themselves have as to how innovative they are. There is definitely a need with the Internet to learn those sorts of skills. When we think about retrieving information, the traditional way is through books. Now we have to think about those skills through the Internet and they are different so it is changing. You think about children writing letters, well we have a

new way, we have e mails which don't have the same structure and children need to know how to do these as well.' (A)

In reality, however, the NLS appears to have stimulated the use of computer-based software which specifically address the reading and writing objectives in the Framework, without challenging the school-centric model which underpins it.

Ball's contention that policy operates as discourse, determining the language and concepts available for responding to the policy text, is very evident in this case study which highlights the extent to which key actors have become powerful spokespersons for the discourse and may be relied upon to represent and implement the policy as efficiently as they can. Their concern is a lack of time to do the job thoroughly, and there is no evidence of any fundamental ideological clash which might produce resistance. Other literacies which fall outside the range of the NLS are not mentioned in the discussions. Respondent A might have been expected to question the model of literacy which some English teachers have criticised for its emphasis on skills at the expense of creativity, but she welcomed the more 'structured' approach:

'I think there have been too many divisions between the different styles of English teaching in the past. The people who put their allegiance to one camp or another. And traditionally there has been a lot of Literature based affective work which is very important, but perhaps there hasn't been the focused look at the technicalities of writing.' (A)

Operating in a pre-determined field in which literacy is part of a broader discourse on standards and quality of teaching, they perceive their role within these boundaries. It is in the 'wild profusion of local practice' that the real impact of their efforts will be discovered, a site where the policy text confronts 'other realities, other circumstances like poverty, disrupted classrooms, lack of materials, multilingual classrooms.' (Ball)

We feel that these agents have limited power and demonstrate signs of all of Croll's roles except 'resister'. They show a little of the true 'policy maker in practice' but chiefly a combination of partner and implementer.. Even though they are the second level i.e. not the actual policy makers or the teachers [the third level] they are clearly insiders to the Strategy and so the policy tends to 'speak them'.

(b) The school / teachers' perspective

The LEA personnel were asked to identify one school in their authority as an example of good policy and practice in relation to literacy.

Four of these 'literacy focused' schools were visited and key staff interviewed (Literacy co-ordinators, members of Senior Management, Heads of Subject Departments etc.) to gauge their attitudes towards the NLS and the ways in which they were mediating it in their respective schools. Lessons were observed in three curriculum areas – English, Geography and Science – nominated by teachers as representative of how literacy fits into subject teaching and learning. The teachers were interviewed briefly before and, when possible, after each observed lesson.

This was not a random sample and it was likely that interviewees at school level might have a largely positive attitude towards the NLS. Yet what emerged was a diversity of policy and practice both between and within schools, as teachers could be seen to adapt and manipulate the NLS model to suit their concepts of literacy and the specific contexts within which they work.

In all four schools, the initial impetus for the 'literacy drive' had come from Senior Management, conscious of a need to improve 'standards' and acquit themselves adequately in the League Table stakes. Having identified literacy as a key to raising achievement, the Head of English in each school was invited to form a Literacy Working Group drawing in teachers from other subject domains. The success of the strategies have owed a great deal to the support from Senior Management and to the community of interest, enthusiasm and commitment of these groups of teachers.

These leading teachers could be seen to implement aspects of the official policy recommendations in diverse ways. We have selected two examples from the data, one that illustrates a real policy maker in practice the other more of an implementer.

School A is a mixed Comprehensive School with 600 pupils, drawing from a large catchment area of over sixty schools. It has enjoyed a degree of acclaim as the third most improved school in the country; three years prior to the research it attracted less than two hundred pupils and was struggling to survive. This dramatic upturn in its fortunes is due partly to the appointment of a highly experienced and skilled teacher as Head of English who was appointed to improve the 'success rate'. She felt that literacy was the key to achieving this and her first task was to set her own house in order:

'The children were very disaffected, they didn't like English and didn't see it as important. It seemed like a problem of taking horses to water, but you couldn't even get them out of the stable. Some might never read a book all the time they were in school. We only had dusty copies of things like 'The Prisoner of Zenda' and 'The Secret Garden' which weren't really inspiring the children to make them see reading as an interesting and enjoyable activity.'

Instructional effectiveness was seen less in terms of the fast paced, teacher centred pedagogies of the NLS than in inviting pupils to take responsibility for their own learning:

'Coming into a school where everything was so shambolic, children's work stored in boxes, nothing on the walls in terms of displays. So we started to work in modules ... all the reading and writing targets were incorporated into the way in which the text was approached. ... We tried to change their expectations and got them to read different genres. And at the end of each term they put their work into a folder and at the back of it is an assessment sheet, so you can sit down and talk to the children about what they achieved and their goal setting for future reference. ... It was getting them to be more critical of their own work and to set themselves targets for the future.'

Having established a new way of working in the English Department, she organised in-service training for other subject teachers, seeing her role as persuading them to 'teach to the child. That is the key to success here. Literacy is about getting children to talk, to value what they are doing in terms of their work.' This formed the basis of her approach to developing a common marking policy for the school:

'The idea that children should come and sit at your desk and mark with you was quite an alien concept. It was done in quite a didactic way.'

With a background in Special Needs Education, she had become involved in researching and developing different teaching and learning styles with lower ability groups. She was sceptical of the idea of a ten-minute starter for lessons focusing on word level work, as advocated in the pilot Strategy, regarding it as 'artificial':

'I find it more beneficial to do it with the children when they are working by integrating it in the lesson.'

This was an example of a teacher who is manipulating the NLS, and the resources and opportunities it affords, to develop innovative methods and more effective learning for all pupils. (She was about to embark on a 'More Able Project', organised to improve liaison with feeder schools and provision for the 'gifted' pupils coming into the school.) Success was breeding success and as the school was no longer suffering from teacher recruitment problems, falling pupil numbers and low funding, it will be in a strongly confident position to argue with the NLS and justify alternatives to school inspectors. She is very much a 'policy maker in practice', showing real understanding of policy and acting as a powerful agent in its interpretation within her own working context.

School B is a girls 11-18 non-selective comprehensive school, which has enjoyed a consistently high rate of academic achievement and draws pupils from a predominantly affluent catchment area. The Head of English, also an experienced and skilled teacher, adopted an approach more in line with the sequences dictated by the official literacy drive. The starting point was a whole school literacy audit, followed by in-

service training for all subject teachers to promote understanding of key words and writing frames as they might relate to existing schemes of work. Pupils were 'tracked' across the curriculum in years 7, 10 and 11 (the start of all Key Stages in the National Curriculum) and a Literacy Development Plan was drawn up for the whole school, concentrating first on reading and then, at the time of the research, on pupils' writing. A number of elements of the pilot NLS had been adopted, including the ten-minute starter activity in English lessons:

'It's like mental arithmetic, literacy awareness at the start of the lesson. One thing we have found effective is having laminates, A4 pieces of card which the girls use as slates with marker pens, and we have competitions, so I might ask them for an adjective or a spelling and they hold them up. It's very useful for me as I can pinpoint who understands and who doesn't. We have compiled a booklet of top tips for tired teachers, which is full of those things for the start of lessons.'

We suggest this provides evidence of a very straight forward and uncritical adoption of NLS practices, this agent simply implements the policy and expects her 'tired teachers' to do the same.

The lessons as literacy events

The lessons were observed *as literacy lessons*, having been selected by the teachers themselves. After some general observations we focus on one lesson that highlights the complex interactions of policy, practice and agency around the issue of literacies.

The material technologies for recording and communicating language were regarded as central to accounts of the lessons. Of the 24 scripts, only two include the employment of 'new' technologies, and what was striking was the extent to which teachers revert to very traditional pedagogies when focusing on literacy. Whole class teaching and use of a whiteboard and pens was the most common method, with attention to key words and root meanings and spellings through a traditional initiate/respond/evaluate pattern of discourse. In one school[11], A4 pieces of laminated card are used as slates, and pupils write their answers with marker pens, holding them up for the teacher to check. Worksheets, textbooks, dictionaries, and exercise books provide the literacy tools for very traditional literacy/subject lessons.
Teachers were interviewed briefly before the observed lessons, to gauge their attitude towards literacy and also whether they regard ICT as an important element in their teaching. Despite the lack of evidence that ICT is utilised in approaches to classroom literacy, all said that ICT is an increasingly important and integrated aspect of their subjects. There was a common acceptance of using the word processor for composing texts, and all of the English teachers made reference to the opportunities for drafting and text transformation. Geography teachers placed particular value on using the Internet and the importance of developing information retrieval skills. Science teachers make use of software packages and data logging, graphs and spreadsheets In varying degrees, all cited problems related to access to computer suites and inadequacy of resources, and welcome the current official drive to improve provision and provide training. There was ample evidence from pupils' work that, although there are practical problems, computers are becoming accepted as a normal part of classroom routines.
What appears to be missing is the link which would establish the relationship between new technologies and literacy learning. Teachers were presented with the 'Rationale' from the National Literacy Strategy, Framework for Teaching Years 7-9 (see above) and asked to comment on it: no mention is made of electronic media and technological literacies. Reflecting a language in use paradigm of literacy teaching, and more enlightened than some of the 'back to basics' rhetoric which has been prominent in previous curriculum documents, it is perhaps unsurprising that most teachers endorsed the rationale. Yet only one teacher pointed out the silence in relation to ICT:
'Literacy is a preparation for life and ICT should be there. The technology we have at the moment is our means of communication in the world of work and schools should reflect that, and the danger is that our pupils are ahead already.'

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[11] This approach is recommended by the NLS, promoted in its video materials and is increasingly being used in secondary schools.

Teachers seem to accept the 'rationale' of the Strategy and to use it when appropriate. However the data from the observations shows that they clearly resist some of more prescriptive elements in the strategy and act in a more policy maker role at the level of their classrooms. We anticipate that as the Ball model suggests, the policy trajectory is now at the practice level and this may be where multiple resistances develop.

Exemplar lesson

A 'reading' of one lesson is presented as it dramatises a number of issues around policy, practice, agency and definitions of literacy. Its overall representativeness will be discussed in relation to the other observed lessons.

A Framework for Analysis

Direct observation of literacy teaching in classroom contexts was undertaken in order to come to some understanding of the interface between literacy policy and practice and, if relevant, ICT. As has already been observed, a majority of the literacy focused lessons in different subject areas relied on traditional technologies, and whilst the sample may not be typical it does suggest that the current literacy drive is not conceptually linked to the promotion of ICT in schools.

Each lesson may be treated as a literacy event, in which texts are read and produced through social interactions between participants in the event, i.e. pupils and teacher. The literacy practices which characterise such events are mediated by the use of material technologies, and 'new' information and communication technologies have the potential to mediate new literacy practices as participants read, write and think electronically.

The lesson exemplar is an English lesson, traditionally regarded as the proper domain of literacy teaching and charged with the responsibility of leading cross-curricular initiatives in schools by the National Literacy Strategy for Key Stage 3. The Literacy Survey results suggest that alongside Maths and Science, it is a key area for the incorporation of ICT into subject teaching and learning. As such it may be assumed that the English Department is an important site for developing the integration of new technologies into literacy learning if they are to have an impact at whole school level.

The Framework for teaching in the Strategy provides a section on 'Approaches to Teaching and Learning' which outlines features of effective literacy pedagogy. Lesson observations were guided by the principles outlined in the Strategy which place an emphasis on teaching which is 'explicit'. Lessons should be structured so as to 'make optimum use of the teacher's expertise and time', demonstrating and modelling into textual activities, scaffolding pupils' learning during guided reading and writing with attention to a particular group, with a plenary at the end of the lesson 'to draw out the learning'. Emphasis is placed on 'increased opportunities for whole class interaction' alongside the promotion of learning that is 'increasingly independent'.
One question is, how can ICT be incorporated into this model? To what extent does it provide opportunities for achieving the Framework's objectives? Are different styles of teaching and learning and lesson structures more appropriate to harness the literacy learning opportunities afforded by new technologies?

Year 11 Group of 17 pupils, 11 boys and 6 girls. 50 minute lesson.
The narrative structure of 'Wuthering Heights'

The teacher was interviewed briefly before the lesson. She has a degree in English, Drama and Media Studies and has been teaching for three years. She feels very strongly that the 'whole literacy thing' is a 'waste of time' if it doesn't address teachers in other subjects, and feels that for her it is an unnecessary repetition of what she already practices in delivering the National Curriculum for English.

'Any English teacher would tell you that they teach literacy in every lesson but the idea that we have to prove that. Anyone who has been trained in the past five years has been taught the strategies they're bringing in so for me it's nothing new.'
She is confident in her own ICT skills and believes that literacy teaching should include teaching these skills to pupils. She described her *aims* for the lesson as 'word processing and the narrative structure of Wuthering Heights'. The statements on the worksheet prepared for pupils ('Why Tell the Story in this Way?', see appendix) were already on their files on the computers. Their task was to open three Word documents entitled 'agree', 'disagree' and 'unsure', and cut and paste the statements into one of the documents, giving a reason supported by a textual quotation for their decision. 'So it's combining discussing in pairs, getting them to look at the text and think about what other pairs think, use their word processing skills, all quite simple stuff.'

The lesson took place in the computer suite situated in the school library, a large wood panelled Victorian room which has tables scattered around the book shelves with the computers situated along each side of the room. The suite has to be pre-booked and subject teachers compete for its use. Whilst the English Department has a small annexed suite, it does not have enough machines for a whole class to use at the same time.
The pupils entered the room and sat around the tables. The teacher spent the first ten minutes addressing the whole group delivering instructions about the technical aspects of the task, how to cut and paste, create documents, use bold and italic. They were given the choice of working alone or in pairs.
The pupils then moved to the computers and all chose to work alone, each with their own screen, in clusters of all boys and all girls. For the rest of the lesson they worked on the task and the teacher visited each pupil, working her way systematically down one side of the room and then the other. Pupils interacted with their neighbours, helping each other sort out operational problems, interspersed with general 'chat'. I did not hear any discussion of the subject content as I circulated around the room. On two occasions, the teacher addressed the whole group, drawing their attention to aspects of the text but she did not gain their attention and few turned away from their screens to focus on what she was saying. Her conversations with individual pupils varied: with some she discussed the statements but the majority sought her help in relation to the technical problems they were having.
The lesson ended with the teacher telling the pupils to save their work, and to read the next two chapters of the novel for homework. They would 'come back to this' in the next lesson, which was to be in their classroom without the computers.

Comment
The use of computers had an impact on pupils' interactions (with each other, with the teacher and with their learning environment) and the lesson problematises any assumption that writing at a computer makes it a more collaborative, less private activity. The pupils did not work in pairs and there was little sense of the social nature of literacy; their main focus was not on *what* but *how* they were writing. It also had an impact on the teacher's pedagogical style. The lesson was in one sense tightly controlled, but without any real structure. She did not have a teaching screen, so the kinds of modelling and scaffolding activities which she supports were not technically possible. Nor was she able to share some of the strategies in a 'plenary' at the end of the lesson. Some of the pupils found the task technically difficult, others found it easy but struggled with the requirement to keep looking at their hard copy of the text to find supporting quotes and their frustrations were partly a product of having to move from screen to page and back. (No pupil completed the task in the lesson.) They were disinclined to turn away from their screens when the teacher tried to gain their attention, so 'teaching points' were repeated to each individual as she moved round the room.
This was an effective literacy teacher, who is confident in using ICT to promote her subject and plans carefully for opportunities to make that 'link'. Asked whether the lesson could be taught as effectively without the computers, she felt that 'an important dimension would be lost'. Yet there are important issues here, and how to run an effective ICT/literacy lesson which maximises learning potential in both is one that needs to be addressed in the light of lessons like this. Pupils did practise their computer skills, and they were learning literacy *for* technology. And the technology was highly motivating, particularly for boys who said they find handwriting slow and laborious.

This lesson is interesting because it brings into focus literacy, ICT and policy. The teacher rejects the policy, she is a resister. Yet her lesson principally uses the school-centric model of literacy. She is primarily interested in the elite literacy of 'English'.

Conclusions

We have attempted to highlight the very powerful ongoing impact of the National Literacy Strategy and to focus particularly on its ambitions to "transform" literacy teaching in the secondary school. In many ways, we suggest, it is likely to succeed in its own somewhat narrow and prescriptive terms. We note from the survey results that schools are increasingly focusing on and prioritising literacy and setting up internal processes to improve its teaching, management and monitoring. Their efforts will need further research and evaluation

It is welcome that one aim of these schools is to demystify subject teaching and to involve all subject specialists, not just English teachers, in helping pupils become literate within each subject. However the model of literacy driving the whole Strategy is school-centric and seems composed of three of Lankshear's relatively acritical constructions with the exclusion of foreign language.

We therefore maintain that from our students' perspective there are serious weaknesses in the 'school-centric' definition of literacy involved. The most glaring of these are first, its pronounced emphasis on the 'autonomous individual' and second, its failure to acknowledge the ever changing nature of literacy and specifically current developments in the electronic media. For example, the research demonstrates that ICT is still seen as a distinct curriculum element in school rather than an integral part of literacy needed to participate in ordinary life. The definition of literacy employed at school level seems more diverse but when teachers focus on literacy itself their pedagogy is dominated by a transmission model relating to print, mostly in a lingering basics formulation.

At present teachers demonstrate all the characteristics of Croll's four categories but there are examples of genuine policy makers in practice. Some teachers see themselves as resisters but they may be operating the implicit NLS definition of Literacy almost without knowing it. From our small sample we surmise that secondary teachers will create considerable dissonance as the prescriptive NLS model becomes more intrusive into their work. The second level, LEA personnel, are the real partners and implementers of the policy, attempting to 'transmit' its message into practice. We anticipate increasing tension between these implementers and the resisters and policy makers in practice.

The NLS strategy has reached a crucial stage. Its hierarchical structure is now at its most developed with every part of the country overseen by 'its' agents. Ofsted are in place to inspect schools' compliance. Clearly schools are very keen to improve their pupil's literacy and they 'know' how to operate the school-centric model. At the classroom level there is plenty of evidence of agency and of policy makers in practice. As the NOF training influences teacher thinking and teaching and as the NLS conflicts with that initiative we anticipate some much more determined and principled resistance. The policy makers in practice are likely to challenge both the school-centric definition of literacy and the top down unresponsive strategy itself.

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Literacy Questionnaire

N.B. These are the questions used but they are not presented in the form of the actual questionnaire

In your view, has your school successfully raised standards of whole school literacy in the last two years?

Do you have an intervention programme designed to raise literacy standards for Key Stage 3 pupils?

If so, is this based on the National Literacy Strategy model?

Do you consider this a suitable model for secondary pupils?

Have you adopted a literacy hour for Year 7 pupils?

Do you feel you are sufficiently aware of the changes in literacy teaching and learning in your feeder primary schools since the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy?

Do you have any system in place for teachers to observe primary literacy teaching?

Has the quality and use of the information you receive from your feeder primary schools improved in the last two years?

Are any specific groups of pupils targeted for attention in relation to their literacy learning?
EAL pupils
Low achievers
High achievers
Boys
Girls
K53
K54

Do you have a method of monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of literacy initiatives in your school?

Who do you regard as responsible for literacy development in your school?
English teachers
SEN teachers
All subject teachers
Head Teacher
Senior staff
Governors
Parents

Has the growth of ICT been a significant factor in thinking about pupils' literacy development in your school?

Are teachers in your school sufficiently technically competent to make use of ICT in developing pupils' reading and writing skills?

Do you consider your school as having enough resources to incorporate the use of ICT in

literacy teaching and learning?

Please tick the relevant box to indicate the extent to which ICT in their teaching. ('Low', 'moderate' or 'high' users)

subject teachers generally make use of

Subject	Low	Moderate	High
English			
Maths			
Science			
Foreign languages			
History			
Geography			
Art			
Music			

Do you use software packages designed to develop pupils' literacy? Is the nature of literacy changed with the growth of ICT?

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